

An Interview with Algie Eggertsen Ballif

Interviewed August 1982 by Cathy Black and Georganne (Gigi) Ballif Arrington

Cathy Black: When did you first come to Brigham Young University in the capacity of a dance instructor or a student that was influential in dance leadership?

Algie Eggertsen Ballif: Well, I would have to say that I became interested as a student in high school in 1915, and of course, I was just then finishing my high school. The Brigham Young University did not have a full college course at that time, for a full four years. They had high school and then two years of normal, and then they would add each year, one freshman or sophomore, until it grew to a four-year college, a supposed university.

Now 1915 was the time when I became very interested in the dance as a student, and there was a very interesting teacher that came to us from the University of Utah, Beatrice Champ. She was at the BYU but one year. She was a very short, almost pudgy little person, and she had wonderful personality; she knew how to relate to all of us. She taught speech and English and physical education. So the dance was only a part of physical education, and she did just enough to sort of touch me off with an interest.

But to say when I became associated with the faculty—I was an assistant teacher nearly all the time that I was in college.

Cathy: When did high school stop and college start?

Algie: I finished high school in 1915, but I took most of my classes in college that same year. I had accrued credits; I went to summer school. I was very interested in school, as my parents were. So I was doing some teaching very early in the 1915–16s. And of course 1916 and '17 were very different years for me. So to say exactly when I became an official faculty member, it would have to be in the years 1917 and '18.

Cathy: I have come across the name Edith Barlow. How does she fit into this time period right now?

Algie: Did the name of Armorer Dixon also come up?

Cathy: Yes.

Algie: They came to the BYU from University of Utah. They were graduate students, my colleagues from the university, and they were teaching in the high school the year after this Beatrice Champ left. They took over the years that I was just finishing my high school and then starting to do a little work in college.

I must have been pretty good—just fair, I wasn't anything exceptional. I simply loved it, that was the thing, and I liked them. They were very interesting. They just taught physical education, and then someone would sneak in a little dance on the side. It was really that. They had to do it just as a casual something not listed in the catalogue, I'm quite sure. You may go check that, I don't know. But Dance was not listed—Physical Education was, but not dance as a part of the physical education department.

They were very interesting women. Oh, I could tell you a lot about them, but that wouldn't be right.

Cathy: If a person like you at that time were to enroll in a class, what kind of class would it be? Just a general physical education class that would have all kinds of things in it?

Algie: At that time, E. L. Roberts was head of the Physical Education Department at BYU. A very young man, just returned from his mission in Germany. He indoctrinated the faculty—President Brimhall and

the few faculty members we had in those days—with the idea that we should have Swedish gymnastics. I tell you, we did everything in the Swedish system of physical education; it became a part of our course.

These girls, Edith Barlow and Armored Dixon, had had that at the University of Utah, so it was a competitive type of thing. The BYU was slow getting into that field, and Coach Roberts was very anxious about it. He'd seen all this exactness in all the military in Germany, and he stayed an extra year in Germany to study. He was then interested in physical education. So it was very rigid.

Cathy: But if you signed up for Swedish gymnastics, that would be where they could sneak in the dance? Would you sign up for something called Swedish Gymnastics? Do you remember? Or was it just Physical Education?

Algie: It was called Physical Education, but of course we knew, from Coach Roberts—we always called him Coach, because he had athletics.

No, dance didn't sneak in except with Edith Barlow. And neither of these women to my knowledge—I could be incorrect here—they were only with us for one year. Armored Dixon went back East to study, and Edith Barlow went back up to the University of Utah. They might have been at the BYU two years. It's difficult for me to say accurately.

At one time—oh, some of these things I hope I won't start laughing, because I had so much fun laughing about what we used to do—they wanted something to entertain the audience while the basketball players were taking their rest and taking a shower in the old gym, which was in the training school: the building that's on the old campus, on the northeast corner. Way up on the third floor was the gym.

So she decided that we were to do the White Rose Mazurka. This was my Polish tradition—I can even hum it—and we were to do it in our gym suits, which were made of wool, and they were way down here (gestures below the knees). I've got a picture of this somewhere. We were afraid to—this comes in another area—pull them up over the knees, but we had to, because we couldn't do the dance if they were way down here (gestures below the knees). So we did the White Rose Mazurka in the men's gym, the old gym, and the audience loved it.

Cathy: How many of you performed it?

Algie: Oh, let's see now, I was on the second row. That meant I wasn't the best, but I was second. I remember the girls that were the best; they were the prettiest. They always picked out the pretty girls, you know, because the men loved to look at them. But some of the rest of us danced fairly well; they had to take us on the second row and get along fine. As I remember, I think there were about eight of us in a row, so I'd say thirty or forty. A class in physical education, that's what it was.

Cathy: So it was the whole class and everybody had to do it? You didn't have any choice in that?

Algie: Oh, I think we all wanted to. Some of the girls weren't very good at all, and they were in the back.

A girl who met me not too long ago came up to me and said, "Oh, Miss Eggertsen"—that's what you were when you taught—"you were so good and I was so jealous of you."

It made me laugh.

But she said, "Oh, I'd watch you." She shook her head, so cute, and told me about her family. She had six children.

I said, "Well that's where you put your dance, and I'm sure it was fine."

Cathy: I read also that prior to the time of Edith Barlow, somebody came—I think it was Miss Gates—to teach the Delsarte system of movement.

Algie: Yes, but not at the Y. That was when I went away to study.

Cathy: So you're saying that Miss Gates never taught the Delsarte system at the Y, or that it was before your time?

Algie: You mean Lucy Gates? The granddaughter of Brigham Young? Well, that was before my day. Have you run into that, too, Gigi?

Georganne Ballif Arrington (Gigi): Yes, you've told me that. I thought you knew; maybe I read that in something else.

Algie: Susie Young Gates would come down and lecture to us about caring for our bodies, and sitting up straight—she wore a great big, long, heavy wool skirt and earrings and a short waist. She tried to tell us a few things like this. She was a woman that summed knowledge in every field. She was quite a character, and she'd tell us all about how to take care of ourselves if the young men touched us. She had a daughter who went to Germany to study music, Lucy Gates, who sang opera.

You see, I learned and taught eurhythmics, very superficially.

Cathy: You learned that in Berkeley?

Algie: I learned that in Boston, and it was the ballet that I studied in Berkeley for one full summer. Does that make sense with you, Gigi?

Gigi: Yes, I've just got another name that's escaping me—Maude May Babcock?

Algie: I can't even be aware of Susie Young Gates ever teaching anything.

Cathy: Maybe it was Maude May Babcock who did the Delsarte system.

Algie: She would be the one, she would. You could get a lot of material about her at the University of Utah—Maude May Babcock.

Gigi: I'm confused. I'll have to go back and read.

Algie: She was the teacher of drama.

Cathy: Here in my notes I've got Gates. I've got in my research from Clayne Jensen that Gates taught a course in the Delsarte system at a summer school in 1892. That was Miss Gates, but it doesn't say Miss Who Gates.

Algie: What year?

Cathy: 1892.

Algie: Well, I wasn't born then. I'm not that old.

Cathy: Okay, then we don't need to worry about that. I was getting the Delsarte mixed up with the eurhythmics, which is Dalcroze. You studied that in Boston, but that's after you left here, right?

Algie: Well, no, I went there in the summer. My husband was there in law school, and I went back there one summer.

Gigi: What year would that be?

Algie: That was in 1921.

Cathy: As I recall from your other interview, you and your husband separated for a while when he went to law school.

Algie: Don't use the word *separated*, we were just not together. You know why I said that.

Cathy: Yes, I do, and I agree.

Algie: It's perfectly okay.

Cathy: You stayed at BYU and taught for a year while he was there. You went there for the summer and studied eurhythmics, and then came back to Utah?

Algie: You bet. That was the only way we could do it.

Cathy: That's what it seemed like, because it seemed like you had some religious problems there when they found out you were LDS. They were maybe hesitant to hire you.

Algie: That's the reason I wanted to stay in Boston. Oh dear, I spent summer just being interviewed and everything, and I finally found out. That was the only reason from the next person I was to go to—the superintendent of a certain district of schools in Cambridge. I didn't want to teach in Boston. That was too far away; not far, but it meant a lot of commuting.

He said, "Well, we're very sorry." In those days you had to put your religious affiliations on your application; of course that's against the civil rights laws now. He said, "We fear that there might be trouble."

Of course it was a very mixed community as far as I knew. I was terribly disappointed; I had wanted to stay there so I could be with George. So I came back to Utah.

Cathy: Did you ever then try to teach the eurhythmics as part of your class?

Algie: Oh yes, I had about six girls is all—who I thought were able to understand it. It was very difficult.

That was taught at Radcliffe, the women's college of Harvard; the schools are together now; there's no discrimination. There's no Radcliffe College anymore; it's all Harvard.

It was a very difficult thing for me to understand and to do, and I knew that this woman, a Frank Swiss woman, had been just steeped in this theory of total body relaxation. That was the hardest thing for me to understand, because I'd grown up with Swedish gymnastics, which was just the opposite. I remember she had us on the floor and we had to learn to roll as though we were just a ball of yarn.

"Soft and easy."

She had a beautiful voice; she could almost sing us to sleep.

Then learning how to move certain muscles so that they were balanced with other muscles—of course that's when I became very interested in kinesiology. I'd had a course here at the Y in that from a doctor, but it didn't touch this particular relationship that it did when I started trying to learn a little about eurhythmics from here. But I haven't followed the development of that particular system; I did do quite a bit in studying the Delsarte system.

Cathy: Oh, did you?

Algie: Because it dovetailed with speech. When I first started teaching, I had to teach Elocution—they called it that. I helped Miss Champ, and helped Edith Barlow in classes. I was an assistant teacher without pay, but I loved it. I guess maybe I offered my services too gratuitously, but I loved it. So I studied the Delsarte system.

Cathy: Where?

Algie: Just from books. I found all the books that I could and bought some myself and gave to the library. Gigi's tried to find some of them, but they don't seem to have been saved. I also found folk dance books and things like that. They described and gave pictures of the gestures and the physical movements that fit the word—the action to the word and the word to the action. That was the model, of course, so that everything could be synthesized and understood. I was fascinated with the teaching.

Cathy: Did you teach this still as part of Swedish Gymnastics? Or was it extracurricular? Did you have other courses by now?

Algie: It was a special class that we'd meet after school, no credit or anything like that. It was just a phase of interest for some of these girls. I tried to help them a little bit.

Gigi: Were there only six girls? Or were there only six that could really master it?

Algie: There could have been more, but there weren't many that were that interested. Most of them were taking phys ed to get that unit of credit they had to have.

Cathy: The ladies in the pictures on Utah Lake . . .

Algie: And up in the forest, the river bottom.

Cathy: Were those some of the same ladies?

Algie: Yes, a few of them. They were some of the same ladies, but they are mostly from the full, larger class of dance—when you get into the time that I was really doing some teaching. That was after I'd had my full summer of twelve weeks at Berkeley, under Nesa Mathe Wehr—I remember her name because I loved it so. She was a French woman who was traveling to different universities and taught a class in the big gym at Berkeley. She had a huge class, and I was one of the students at that time.

Cathy: Then you came back to Utah and taught. Did you have a special course then for dance? Was it called ballet or anything?

Algie: No, all I could do was to make it a part of the physical education. I gradually got it in, but it was never listed that the students had signed up for dance; it was always physical education. First year and second year—they could take two years.

Gigi: Algie, didn't you ever get it to the point where it was called "Natural Dancing?"

Algie: Yes, that was within the class.

Gigi: But it wasn't listed in the catalog?

Algie: I don't think it was ever listed that way.

Gigi: I think it was.

Algie: Oh good. I can't recall if it was. It was called Aesthetic Dance.

Gigi: Let me ask you this, then: You went to Harvard (Radcliffe) in 1921; when you came back, that was the fall of 1921.

Algie: George graduated in '21 from the BYU. He'd been to war, and so I went to Radcliffe that summer and then came back to Utah. Then he transferred from Harvard to Berkeley.

Gigi: So in the fall of 1921, you were teaching at BYU. You'd just been through a eurhythmics course in 1921, so your classes had more of a eurhythmic emphasis in the things you did?

Algie: Yes, I think you could say that. Of course, I wasn't so aware of that. This was something that touched me personally, and I wanted the others to feel it.

Gigi: It's only natural that you would want to share something that you just had learned about. So 1922, the next year, was the year you went to Berkeley?

Algie: Wait a minute. George came back from the war in 1918, the year I graduated from college. I didn't graduate from college until 1918; we're forgetting that interim when I was sent to Rexburg, Idaho to teach—sort of on a teacher's mission. That was the year before I graduated, '16 and '17. Then George came home from his mission, and that's when I met him. Then he had to go the next year, the fall of 1917, into the service, into the World War I, and then I was graduating in 1918.

Gigi: I'm wondering what year you went to Berkeley.

Algie: My father went with me. That would have been—yes, that was early; I've been wondering. I hadn't met George then. No. I don't think I had.

Gigi: So it could have been around 1915?

Algie: Well, I mentioned '15, because that's when I went from high school into college, and I was doing some teaching then for the Provo City Schools. I've often wondered why I was, but I was. I got on a bicycle and went down to the Third Ward church, and the girls would come over from the high school, run two blocks. That was to take phys ed.

Gigi: Do you think that's the time you went to Berkeley?

Algie: I think it might have been, because Father was working for his degree. I wanted to go with him because I was just beginning to want to teach; I just loved it.

Gigi: I was trying to get the chronology.

Algie: Sure, yes.

Cathy: That's helpful. So if I'm not confused now, you were teaching in Utah, and as a result of the summer study that you had done in Boston and in Berkeley, you brought those experiences back, and you were doing more dance in your classes than had been done previously?

Algie: Yes.

Cathy: But it was still part of something else, not really on its own, with its own label?

Algie: No, the nearest we got in those earlier years was what we called Social Leadership.

Cathy: That's the next place I want to go. Somewhere, I believe it was in your other interview, you mentioned that E. L. Roberts wished to agree with the Church emphasis on social leadership, and that that meant a shift in the emphasis in the program. I want to know what that shift went to and what effect that had on aesthetic dance.

Algie: The reason the Church wanted the social leadership program was they felt that they needed to establish fine traditional policies within the Church that would make recreation very worthwhile and dignified. We were having a little difficulty at the BYU; Coach Roberts and I would have to go up and tap people on the shoulder and tell them that they weren't dancing properly, and they'd get mad. There'd be little indications from the students of disagreement with the faculty, which was very evident in those days. But it was rather confined to the two groups.

So the Church, through the Church school, wanted to build a recreation program for the Church that would keep people doing uplifting things in the area of physical education and dancing. This program was mostly ballroom dance. We had the famous teacher from the Church, Mr. W. O. Robinson. You've run across his name, I'm sure. He's still alive, well up in his nineties. He would learn these dances and come and teach them to Coach Roberts and to myself.

Then we would have a great leadership week when people would come from all over the Church—just like the Education Week BYU has now, only it was confined more to physical activity. There were activities for Church groups to build up fine recreational facilities within the ward and within the Church groups. It became a yearly adventure, and was very popular, when I got back from Rexburg and was teaching here.

We had such marvelous programs in the ladies' gym, and up in the men's gym. We taught vast groups of people. I think about them—there was no sound amplification in those days; we just had to yell and shout what we wanted them to do. I'll never forget some of those experiences I had.

It was a very significant change in the attitude of the students. They seemed to fall for it, to like it. They learned square dancing, they learned round dancing, they learned ballroom dancing. Those were the days that we taught some of the dances which you danced together; that were done as couples. Then there were good waltzes, which were very popular.

Cathy: As you started to spend more time in this area and the popularity picked up, did that mean that the popularity of aesthetic dance dwindled? Was there less time given to it?

Algie: No, it grew. I was so interested in it. Gigi knows the story of my early interest through a certain light opera that I saw, and that was when I was just beginning high school. Something took hold of me at that time, as a very young girl. I wanted to dance, and that grew in my feeling.

Coach Roberts was right with me; he was very understanding, very sympathetic, and very knowledgeable too. He helped me a lot in trying to have extra classes—they didn't get credit in aesthetic dancing at all, but it was a part of physical education. I just fit it in.

Cathy: E. L. Roberts gave you that support, so you had it from your immediate superior. What about fitting that subject matter in the context of the whole university? Did you have support in higher administration? Not so much?

Gigi: Tell them that story.

Algie: Not so much. The interesting thing about that is that the administration didn't pay much attention to it. Then as it became an obvious activity, they would observe it. There were some that criticized when we did the White Rose Mazurka. You'd just start laughing if you saw it now, but we had one or two comments about it.

Cathy: About what?

Algie: When we got to dancing that, the next day or so, E. L. Roberts called me and said there were one or two individuals who said they thought our bloomers should have been pulled down below our knees when we danced. I had tried my very best to get E. L. to say we could not wear stockings—do it barefooted because the floor was quite slick and it would have hurt—but he couldn't get that to be approved.

So we had to dance in our gym shoes. Some of the girls could afford ballet slippers. My mother never let me buy some. I guess that was one reason there were some on the front row that had ballet slippers, and some on the second that didn't.

That was quite a stir among the girls at the time, and there were other things.

Cathy: The stir was that they couldn't have bare feet? Or that that some girls had ballet slippers?

Algie: That we mustn't dance barefooted.

Cathy: I found that written on the back of a photograph that somebody submitted; I think it was one of your students, saying, "The President did not approve of us dancing in bare feet." So I already had an inkling of that.

Algie: There were other incidents that were much more difficult for me to accept than that. I wasn't the teacher then—that was Edith Barlow; she was the one that taught us the White Rose Mazurka. I was only a student.

As I became a teacher, then it started to become a little more difficult, and the people were paying a little more attention to the department. It was growing in athletics and also in physical education—and dance, because I just had to have people that would want to learn.

I took a class at the Deseret Gym; I'd go up every night. Coach Roberts would take me and another teacher up, and he would do things he wanted to do. I took a class with the father of Christensen, who had taught ballet. One summer I was there after three weeks, and I had a little indication of where I had studied, because I was interested in that. Opportunities came, and so I was able to accept them.

Cathy: In some of the photographs, I have seen bloomers and wands and that kind of thing—the gym suits—but then in some, there are Isadora-type robes and drapes. I'm interested in when that transition happened, and if you had any problems in having that accepted?

Algie: That was quite an event in Provo. First of all, this is when dancing became recognized as a part of the physical education department. But I can't recall—and I'd like to know, Gigi—if it were ever put in the catalog.

Gigi: If dance was put in the catalog? I thought it was.

Cathy: I've got that. I thought I brought the papers today, but I didn't bring them. I'll tell you that.

Algie: Well, my memory can be very far off on that; it seemed like it was all physical education—like social leadership that we had to teach. Social leadership was men and women together; Coach Roberts and I did that together. As far as listing it and girls signing up for it, though, it seemed that I had to just fit

it in to the regular physical education class, and then I had special classes after hours of the regular program. The school was small then.

Cathy: So the costuming, the switch into the Isadora robes, how did that happen?

Algie: That's very interesting too. One of the first incidents that occurred was when they wanted me to get some girls together to perform a dance for a junior prom. We had already started a dance with the tie and dye material—do you know what that means? You would color soft material, and the girls would try to learn how to handle the scarves gracefully.

That naturally brought up, "Well, how are we going to dress?"

I had dresses that I knew I had to take with me to the schools that I went to. I could rent one at Radcliffe College. They had them right there, and they were nice; we weren't exposed at all. They fitted in to the type of eurhythmics that we were studying, but of course, most of that was done on the floor. That was interesting.

Now to get back to my subject here. To prepare the dance, I wanted to use the music from *Midsummer Night's Dream*. I had about twelve girls, and they were very good. About three of them are still alive, and we talk about it quite frequently.

I wanted them to have very nice pastel dresses. They made their own, bought their own material, and tied and dyed it so it was a colorful blend. Of course you wouldn't call it very beautiful now what they did, but I thought it was nice.

We were to do this in the ladies' gym. I shall never forget the night that we were going to have the last rehearsal; the junior class was there decorating, and in walked our president, George H. Brimhall, and Elbert Eastmond, who was head of the art department—he was telling how to decorate the hall. We were practicing and Brother Brimhall saw these girls barefooted with just a little—that much—of a sleeve over their arm. He called me down the end of the hall, and in no uncertain terms said they had to have a cap in their sleeves and they would have to wear stockings.

This was the night before the performance, and I just felt terrible about it. You couldn't argue with him; you just had to do what you were told. So I told the girls, and they and their mothers got to work—found stockings and dyed some of them pink and yellow and pale green. They put little caps over their shoulders. That was the first difficult time I had, and it was very hard.

Cathy: Did those restrictions ever relax during the time that you were a faculty member?

Algie: Yes, they did. When Dr. Harris came; I taught under him.

Cathy: He replaced President Brimhall?

Algie: Franklin Harris followed President Brimhall. He was brought down from the AC, and he was a very understanding person.

Cathy: What is the AC?

Algie: The Agricultural College. It's called Utah State now. He was very understanding, fine.

I was so anxious to do something that was going to really be beautiful for my last year here, before I went to Berkeley to be with George his last year in law.

I had read so many Greek myths and I had seen in Boston the semblance of a ballet that dealt with a Greek myth. If I could only remember what it was. I was just overcome with the beauty of that. So I got to work, and I found one that I liked. I've got the program for that still.

I decided that I'd just write it myself, and get the music. It was very simple, but it was the story of Adonis and Venus. A love story. One was a hunter in Greek mythology and also in Roman. Maybe I used the wrong title. It was Adonis and Aphrodite, I guess. I haven't gone over this for some time.

We did it in the College Hall, and it lasted for about an hour and a half. It carried the story, the whole mythology of this couple that fell in love. The goddess of the hunt and the god of love. It carried the myth to where they go to the oracle of Delphi—that's the picture you've seen of the girls coming to tripods with the incense. We did that out in the forest, just for pictures, but it rather took hold; people thought how lovely that was. I have to be frank, I hated to leave.

Cathy: Because dance was just getting started at BYU?

Algie: Yes, just getting started. I was feeling an awakening of interest in that type of thing.

I was such an amateur; I bow my head in humility when I think of what I dared do. We were a rural city, a small university, very family oriented and religiously oriented. It wasn't easy, and I was just a part of it all. I worked with the Church all the time, and sometimes I wonder how it was I dared. But I had a father and mother that were very encouraging for new ideas. They didn't think it would get away from the beaten path. They helped me. I talked with them, and with my sister Thelma—she was about three years younger than I, and one of my good students too.

The myth built a very beautiful goodbye. I remember I left just before school was out, the last part of May, to go back to Berkeley.

Cathy: Who replaced you? The only person I have after you is Wilma Jepson.

Algie: That's right, she took my place.

Cathy: She seemed more into marching things and more structure.

Algie: Yes she was. Coach Roberts and I started the Posture Parade, that's something they can't deny. That was met with disapproval—the way the girls were dressed—by President Clark.

Cathy: Where did he fit?

Algie: He was very active in the Church, an apostle. The law school is named after him. He met with the faculty. That was when the great debate came about their bloomers, because it was in the spring when we held it, and I thought the women shouldn't have to wear wool. I'd gone with Herald Clark, who was the purchasing agent of the school, to see if we could get some cotton pants for them—they were pleated. He got samples, but the school wouldn't approve them. The students had to wear their gym suits and had to wear stockings. They couldn't march without stockings on.

Cathy: That was still while you were in Utah?

Algie: Yes, that was while I was in Utah. Wilma picked that up and did a wonderful job with it.

Cathy: But she didn't pursue the aesthetic or modern dance much, according to my research. Is that true?

Algie: I don't think she did much with it.

Cathy: She didn't seem inclined that way.

Algie: She was quite a physical culturalist. She was a much heavier girl than I, more of a tomboy, and a very capable person—a very interesting person. She didn't stay very long, maybe two years?

Cathy: I have her staying until her death in 1939, which would have made it sixteen years.

Algie: I didn't think it was that long, but it might be. That's the time that I was busy.

Cathy: Some of these other dates from this same source are incorrect. It's the same source that says you started in 1910, so that may not be accurate.

Algie: If I started in 1910, then I started when I was fourteen years old. I was born in 1896.

Cathy: Well, I have her here from 1923 to '39, and then it was Leona Holbrook in 1934.

Algie: Yes.

Cathy: Dance picked up again.

Algie: She really should have the name of the mother of that department, because what I did was just a taste, just to try to create a little interest, and the girls loved it. That day that we went to the river to have pictures taken, I didn't have to say much to them.

Some of the faculty men said, "We'll take our cars and take them up to the river," and some of them were criticized for that. One brother was so afraid that some of these faculty members got off with some of these lovely girls in these flowing Grecian robes. Just ridiculous. They were so helpful to us.

Those girls—I didn't have to do but a little bit to tell them how to be a part of nature, be nymphs of the woods. That was the idea—to feel that relationship between themselves and nature. I think the pictures show it.

Cathy: I agree.

Algie: Especially for girls who were not used to anything like that.

Cathy: This is a yes or no question: were you, yourself, ever directly exposed to Isadora Duncan or the Denishawn?

Algie: Exposed through reading. I saw Ruth St. Denis and Shawn in Boston.

Cathy: You saw them perform there?

Algie: Performing, yes.

Gigi: Algie, you said when you were in Boston when you saw a ballet that was about a Greek myth. Was it a ballet company or was it Denishawn? Can you remember?

Algie: Maybe it was Denishawn. I know George was so interested in what I was doing that we went to two or three performances—did I ever write that up? I kept a diary in those days when things happened.

Gigi: I was just curious if it was a ballet.

Algie: Of course there was the opera that set me going as a very young girl: *Madame Sherry*. I always have to say that gave me the interest.

Gigi: That's interesting, because the song Algie always talks about is "Every little movement has a meaning all its own," and that's in Denishawn's book.

Algie: We lived in the house next door. The three front rooms had folding doors, and when the folks would go to bed, I would get some towels and some pieces of cloth, and I'd dance. I must have been a great big oaf. But it satisfied something inside of me.

Cathy: Did you ever consciously align those to religious feelings at all? Was it just something you had to do, or did you ever really think about religious implications?

Algie: No, I didn't. Maybe I should have done, but life was already so full religiously with the activities of the Church that I engaged in. It seemed just to be, all of it, a part of me. There was nothing that I can separate now.

Cathy: Were your students the same way?

Algie: Oh yes. I had one girl who was not an LDS, and she was living in Utah with an aunt—very wealthy people—and she was quite an inspiration to the other girls because she had a lot of poetic expression in her body. She was beautiful, but then a different kind of beauty—personality beauty. She had quite an influence on Alice Tare and some of these girls I've told you about.

Now when you talk about the community, I worked in the community all the time. In the summer we'd have the Fourth of July like they do now, very simple.

Brother Eastmond, who was head of the art department at the BYU, he was quite a man; he was fascinating. He came to me one day and said, "Now Miss Eggertsen, we want to have a real dance down on Center Street at the fountain."

The fountain was right between University Avenue and Center Street—just go straight down—a big fountain that covered the whole intersection. Kind of like the monument in Salt Lake City, you have to drive around it. It was full of water, and it was crude but it was nice.

There was a wide platform all the way around it, and Brother Eastmond conceived the idea that it would be very nice if we performed a dance, and he would have Brother Sauer's band play "On the Beautiful Blue Danube." The girls were to dance around the fountain and then end with the nice statuesque movement on top of the fountain. Of course, I added to it and got the girls going up and down and doing it as gracefully as possible.

Right toward the last, just as he was getting the band going, one of the girls fell in! Her leg slipped! Had that not happened, I wouldn't remember it so well. But that impressed it upon my mind. We had to get this girl out and she was so embarrassed. She was a good dancer too, but she overdid herself.

Cathy: Did you mostly dance when somebody needed something? When did you do your concerts or your performances? Were they mostly when people asked you to perform for a basketball game or something on Center Street?

Algie: Yes.

Cathy: You didn't have a regularly scheduled concert season or anything like that?

Algie: Oh, no. We didn't even have that in music. It had to come whenever they got ready.

Gigi: The ballet you choreographed, you just decided to do it?

Algie: That's it. Then we would do it in the gym. They would also always be asking us for performances during intermissions of dances. They don't do that anymore. We always had an intermission.

Cathy: Sometimes they do, sure they do.

Gigi: I performed for a few last year.

Algie: Do they? The purpose then was so the boys could go fill up their cards for dances, and change them if they wanted to change some.

Cathy: Fill up what?

Gigi: Their dance cards.

Algie: We call it a program. You'd be dancing with a certain person.

They'd come up and say, "Can I have the third dance?" Or the fifth dance, or what have you.

There'd be an intermission, and some of the girls, all of us, got mad sometimes because some beautiful strange girl would come in an elegant dress, and they'd all want to dance with her. If they decided to change their dance, and they couldn't fill it in, we'd have to rub ours out and watch them dance with someone else.

Gigi: That's rude.

Cathy: I think I have one last question: In the classes that you taught, the little portions, would you teach a whole class in dance one day? Or just a portion of it?

Algie: Yes, I did. I mixed it up, though. I'd give them a little eurhythmics, and then a little ballet—they all knew the movements, positions and things like that. We tried to bring it into the dance as well as we could. Then social dance came in too. It was almost a hodgepodge of everything. I hate to say it, but it was.

Cathy: Did any of the students choreograph or improvise or move to the music or anything like that?

Algie: Yes, I noticed that in the little dance drama. That's what we called it: the dance drama. The girls had wonderful ideas.

They'd come to me and say, "Miss Eggertsen" (or Mrs. Ballif, then), "Don't you think this would be better if we do it this way?"

They'd get together in the gym and practice and work it out. I was so proud of them because they had the initiative. Some of them were very good.

I remember that with the oracle of Delphi, when we were to do that on the stage, there had to be a number of changes. There were a number of girls that should have been in the dance drama, but there wasn't room on the stage, so the students had a suggestion about having two different oracles—maybe it wouldn't be true to the history, but then there were two of the oracles during the burning of the incense so that they all had a chance. I was glad for that; there was a mutual love. I never felt the conflict, or else I've forgotten it.

These experiences were very dear to me, and all the girls were very dear to me. They still are, the few that are alive.

Gigi: Did you actually burn incense on stage?

Algie: Oh, yes. There was a professor in the chemistry department who made a concoction that made a nice perfume. We had a bowl to have it in, and the two leading ladies, the goddess and god, were the ones that officiated. Of course, it's not true to the story, to light the torch. We added a lot of crazy things that made it dramatic.

Cathy: You said a god. Does that mean you had a male participating?

Algie: No, there was a girl that took the part of the man.

Cathy: So it was women that participated the whole time.

Algie: Yes, they were all women. The only place we had men was in the social dance area and the physical education classes.

Gigi: Was that mostly because the physical education classes were segregated?

Algie: They were. I had that in the summer, when I taught summer school, and I did that before I graduated—they kept me awfully busy. They finally paid me a little money: about \$15 a month to teach during the summer. They had men and women together, but most of them were teachers.

Gigi: Was that to get extra classes?

Algie: Yes.

Cathy: You say onstage when you did some of these performances. Were you yet performing in College Hall?

Algie: Yes, everything was done in College Hall. That's all we had.

Cathy: I'm confused.

Algie: Well, and the ladies' gym.

Cathy: So sometimes things were done in the gym?

Algie: Ladies' gym, men's gym. The men's gym was in the training school.

Cathy: Those were for the basketball games of the men. Then the dances and so on were in the women's gym, and then any concert things were done in College Hall?

Algie: Right, in College Hall.

Cathy: So your Greek myth was done there?

Algie: Yes.

Cathy: I read somewhere about how they had to go across the street to the blacksmith to get the proscenium arch for College Hall.

Algie: Yes, always. There was a blacksmith.

Cathy: That was during your time? They would have to put up the stage for you?

Algie: Yes. This is a story for you. This was kind of funny—I had it all ready to tell. I would have to go from the men's gym where I taught a class with Coach Roberts on Social Dancing—that was for men and women. I'd go from the men's gym across the lawn and over to the ladies' gym for my last class.

I think this was in the fall of the year; I know the path was good. I was in my gym suit—my stockings, my shoes, and this heavy wool suit that mother had made out of the woolen goods that came from the woolen mills. As I crossed over—you would call it now the Academy Square—President Brimhall’s office was in the building on the south side where the steps go up.

He must have been looking out the window—of course, I know he was—and all of a sudden I heard a call, “Miss Eggertsen!” Oh, he had a loud, rough voice, very commanding. I stopped and he said, “Come in.” I went in up the steps, and went into his office. He said, “I’m surprised to see you. You’re going across the road in that uniform?”

“Yes, and I’m going to my next class.”

“Well,” he said, “This is the last time. Get a skirt made, so that you put on that skirt. I won’t have you crossing the street like that in your gym suit.”

Cathy: Back to the sewing machine, right?

Algic: That was the beginning of his rigidity; he was very hard on all of us. But he was a wonderful man.